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January 31, 2006

Lester Snow, Director  
Department of Water Resources  
P.O. Box 942836  
Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

**RE: SOUTH DELTA IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM**

Dear Director Snow:

On behalf of the Desert Water Agency, I am writing today to express the Agency's support for the Department of Water Resources' (DWR) South Delta Improvements Program (SDIP), a critical water supply, water quality and environmental project designed to meet California's diverse water needs. This October, DWR and the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation released a draft Environmental Impact Report/Statement (EIR/S) for SDIP, kicking off an important public review and comment process.

The Desert Water Agency was formed in 1961 to take part in the State Water Project (SWP) as a contractor. Since then, the Agency has added responsibilities for water, recycled, and wastewater services, and power generation. Ratepayers and taxpayers have invested heavily in the SWP by Contract, currently running through the year 2035. Reliable water deliveries from the Delta are essential to our SWP Contract and the water needs of our community.

California needs a safe, reliable and high quality water supply to keep up with our rapidly rising population and fast-growing trillion-dollar economy. However, we have limited water supplies in our arid state, so we must better utilize our existing water resources and infrastructure; otherwise, we put our communities, farms, environment and businesses at great risk. Two-thirds of California receives its water from the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Given its importance, we need better ways to manage the Delta's water delivery system, as well as the water itself.

SDIP is a responsible and balanced plan to better utilize and integrate our existing water management infrastructure in the Delta. Collectively, it will improve our state's water supply reliability, water quality and the overall health of the Bay-Delta ecosystem. The program will construct seasonal tidal gates to protect fish, and improve water circulation and quality in the Delta, dredge select delta channels to improve water deliveries for local farmers, and allow State Water Project deliveries to increase modestly – only when needed and environmentally safe to do so.

Currently, the state is constrained in its ability to use surplus water supplies. We have the infrastructure to move the water, but until SDIP is approved, the state's water managers cannot fully or responsibly use the existing system. SDIP calls for only a 3-5% increase in the average amount of water pumped from the Delta.



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More significantly, SDIP will provide the flexibility to shift the timing of water deliveries when surplus is available and when environmentally safe to do so. SDIP is an ideal option for California to advance – it will not require building a new project or the construction of major new infrastructure. And, funding for the program has already been secured through passage of voter-approved bonds in 2000 (Proposition 13).

Importantly, SDIP will help protect important Delta environmental resources. Specifically, it will help protect fish species in the Delta channels. At the same time, by providing the state greater flexibility in how and when SDIP operates its system of pumps, fish are granted greater protections.

Given all these points, SDIP is supported by a statewide, broad coalition of water, agriculture, business, planning organizations, and local government officials including the Association of California Water Agencies, State Water Contractors, California Chamber of Commerce, California Business Properties Association and the Western Growers Association.

Desert Water Agency strongly supports the SDIP and encourages all key stakeholders to help advance this critically needed project.

Thank you,

**DESERT WATER AGENCY**

David K. Luker  
General Manager-Chief Engineer

DKL/jlt

cc (fax): Hon. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, (916) 445-4633  
Mr. Ryan Broderick, Director, California Department of Fish and Game, (916) 653-7387  
Mr. Mike Chrisman, Secretary, California Resources Agency, (916) 653-8102  
Mr. Joe Grindstaff, Director, California Bay-Delta Authority, (916) 445-7297  
Mr. Kirk Rodgers, Regional Director, Mid-Pacific Region, U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, (916) 978-5114  
Mr. Dan Skopec, Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Office of the Governor, (916) 324-6358  
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